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GLOBAL POVERTY, MIGRATION, AND GUEST WORKER PROGRAMS

by

CARSON YOUNG

Under the direction of Andrew I. Cohen and Andrew J. Cohen

ABSTRACT

The first chapter of this thesis argues that allowing greater immigration from poor countries to rich countries is a promising way to alleviate global poverty. Since guest worker programs may be a politically realistic way of increasing immigration from poor countries to rich countries, then if the argument in chapter one is successful, there are strong reasons for people who care about reducing global poverty to support increased guest worker programs. However, some philosophers argue that guest worker programs are unjust because they are likely to cause worrisome relational inequalities between guest workers and full citizens. The second chapter of this thesis argues that these relational egalitarian arguments against guest worker programs fail, and that there are in fact strong relational egalitarian reasons to support increased guest worker programs.

INDEX WORDS: Global justice, Poverty, Immigration, Guest workers, Egalitarianism

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CARSON YOUNG

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Master of Arts

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INTRODUCTION

According to statistics from the United Nations Development Programme, in 2006, 830 million people were chronically undernourished, 1.1 billion people lacked access to clean drinking water, and 2.6 billion people lacked access to basic sanitation.¹ The scale of absolute deprivation in the world is horrendous. It is perhaps even more appalling when contrasted with the vast wealth of many citizens of the developed world. Some experts on global poverty, such as economist Jeffrey Sachs, think that if the world's rich were willing to forgo just a small fraction of their current consumption and divert it to the world's poor, severe poverty would be a thing of the past.

That those of us who are lucky enough to be rich by global standards have thus far demonstrated little willingness to make the relatively small sacrifices necessary to fund poverty-reducing programs that Sachs and others advocate does not seem to reflect well on us, morally speaking. According to Thomas Pogge, however, framing global poverty in this way actually understates the magnitude of rich countries' moral failings. Pogge argues that rich countries do not just allow poverty to persist in poor countries; they actively perpetuate it by imposing a global order on the poor that exacerbates global inequality and contributes to the violation of the basic human rights of the world's least well off.

Pogge's argument is controversial. But whether or not Pogge's particular moral indictment of the world's rich is correct, it is less controversial that severe poverty is bad and that

¹ Pogge, Thomas Winfried Menko. *World Poverty and Human Rights*. Cambridge: Polity, 2008,

we have reason to do our best to end it.² This brings us to a more practical question: in order to make severe poverty a thing of the past, what should we, as citizens of the world's rich countries, do? One thing that we could do (though by no means the only thing) is open our national borders to allow more of the world's poor to come live and work in our home countries and take advantage of the many opportunities that are not available in their native countries. This approach has intuitive appeal: it is one thing to not help somebody who is in need. It is another thing to use state power to stop a needy person from moving from one place to another in search of a better life.

However, some of philosophy's most prominent anti-poverty advocates have been (perhaps surprisingly) skeptical of the idea that more open immigration might be an important part of an international effort to reduce global poverty. Two of these philosophers are Gillian Brock and Thomas Pogge himself. I begin chapter one of this thesis with an examination of the arguments that Brock and Pogge make for why advocates for the global poor should not necessarily favor more immigration from poor countries to rich countries. For the sake of comparison, I follow this discussion with a brief look at the anti-poverty policies that Pogge and Brock themselves prefer. I proceed to evaluate Pogge and Brock's reasons for opposing increased freedom of movement from poor countries to rich countries, arguing that most of them are unconvincing. Although increased low-skilled immigration is no silver bullet when it comes to fighting global poverty, there probably are no such silver bullets. Increased immigration, in

² What it means to "do our best," and the precise content of the moral duties we have to alleviate global poverty, are indeed controversial issues that aren't addressed here. The fact that most people accept that there is at least some reason to reduce severe poverty, and the fact that anyone who accepts this has reason to care about *how* we should go about reducing severe poverty, is enough to motivate the discussion in this thesis.

conjunction with other policies, has an important role to play in the struggle to alleviate severe global poverty.

Perhaps the strongest reason for anti-poverty advocates to be skeptical of the potential of increased migration from poor countries to rich countries to reduce global poverty is that it is politically unrealistic. There are various reasons for this. One important reason is expressed in a famous quote by the economist Milton Friedman: “You cannot simultaneously have free immigration and a welfare state.”³ The worry is that poor people will not migrate to rich countries to seek out opportunities to make money as productive members of society, but rather will take advantage of rich countries’ generous welfare systems. Now, whether immigrants are a net drain on rich countries’ welfare programs is an empirical matter, and there is evidence that in the long run immigrants in general often do *not* impose a burden on the countries to which they migrate.⁴ However, this likely depends on the rates of immigration and on the demographics of the immigrant population. It seems that certain classes of immigrants (such as those without a high school diploma) probably do impose at least a short-run fiscal burden on host countries.⁵ I should acknowledge that the class of immigrants with which this thesis is primarily concerned, those with low skills coming from developing countries, is more likely than some other classes of immigrants to be a burden on host countries’ welfare systems. At any rate, the extent to which some classes of immigrants are a fiscal drain on host countries is a complicated empirical question that lies beyond the scope of this thesis. What matters for considerations of political feasibility is that many citizens of the world’s rich countries *perceive* immigration as a threat to

³ *Study With Milton Friedman*. Perf. Milton Friedman. FR33MINDS, 2009. DVD.

⁴ Razin, Assaf, and Efraim Sadka. "Unskilled Migration: A Burden or a Boon for the Welfare State?" *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 102.3 (2000): 463-79.

⁵ See, for example, Smith, James, and Barry Edmonston, eds. *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*. Rep. Washington, DC: National Academy, 1997. *The National Academies Press*. National Research Council.

the welfare state, and thus strongly oppose open borders immigration policies. (By “open borders policy,” I mean a policy under which law-abiding non-citizens are free to enter a country to live or work for as long as they wish and are granted most of the same political rights as full citizens.)

Opposition to immigration on these grounds does not render infeasible all policies aimed at reducing current restrictions on migration from poor countries to rich countries. Countries that offer welfare benefits and other social services have criteria that must be met in order to be eligible for these programs and citizenship generally. Additionally, a country does not need to extend full citizenship status to all those who enter into its territory to live and work. Therefore, it is at least *possible* for a country to allow people into its territory without granting them full citizenship and the full range of rights that go along with being a full citizen, including rights to benefit from subsidies and transfer programs. Many actually existing countries have policies like these in place. They are commonly referred to as “guest worker” programs. Whether such a program is desirable will, of course, depend somewhat on specifics. But if the first chapter of this thesis is successful in arguing that increased immigration from poor countries to rich countries is a promising global poverty alleviation policy, then the initial appeal of guest worker programs is clear: they give people access to better opportunities than those that exist in their native countries while avoiding one of the aspects of open border policies that makes them politically unfeasible. Therefore, for those who care about poverty alleviation, guest worker programs are, absent countervailing considerations, a policy that is worth supporting.

But regardless of the details about the policy disputes that mark any discussion of guest worker programs, some prominent philosophers who have written on the subject argue that there *are* countervailing conditions that justify opposition to most guest worker programs. These philosophers tend to oppose guest worker programs because of their commitment to a view

called “relational egalitarianism”. Briefly, relational egalitarians believe that inequality matters primarily to the extent that it makes individuals or groups vulnerable to oppression or domination at the hands of other individuals or groups. Michael Walzer and Christopher Heath Wellman are two philosophers who have written about guest worker programs and who endorse relational egalitarianism. Walzer and Wellman accept two conclusions: (1) countries have the right to exclude immigrants from entry and (2) countries that allow immigrants to enter face fairly strict moral constraints on the rights that they may require immigrants to waive upon entry.

I begin chapter two of this thesis with a discussion of the different versions of relational egalitarianism that Walzer and Wellman endorse. Next, I consider how these relational egalitarian concerns apply to guest worker programs. Granting that relational egalitarians highlight some good reasons to be wary of guest worker programs, I will argue that these critiques do not, by themselves, justify rejecting guest worker programs as a component of a reasonably just and humane immigration policy. This is because, as I will show, even imperfectly designed guest worker programs have the potential to reduce the sort of inequality with which relational egalitarians are concerned. If my main arguments in chapter one and chapter two of this thesis are successful, then people who care about the plight of the world’s poor have strong reason to include reasonably well-designed guest worker programs in the set of global poverty alleviation policies that they support.

CHAPTER 1: Immigration and Poverty Alleviation

1.1 Economic Reasons for Supporting Increased Immigration

The moral case for allowing increased immigration can be made in a variety of ways. Christopher Heath Wellman helpfully divides pro-immigration arguments into four categories:

egalitarian, libertarian, democratic, and utilitarian.⁶ In this chapter, I do not attempt to canvas all the moral reasons in favor of reducing immigration restrictions. I argue in favor of increased immigration on the relatively narrow grounds that it will reduce severe global poverty. To begin, it is useful to discuss the economics of immigration, both in terms of theory and empirical evidence. Some readers might think that my focus on severe global poverty, as well as my use of economic arguments, means that my argument in this chapter presupposes utilitarian moral theory. There is something right about this. Because of diminishing marginal utility, utilitarian moral theory is straightforwardly concerned with the plight of the world's poorest. Additionally, "utility" is a central concept in both neoclassical economic theory and utilitarianism. However, though my arguments here clearly resonate with utilitarianism in certain ways, I think it is wrong to view them as primarily utilitarian in nature. Most plausible moral theories will agree that the severe poverty that persists in the world today is a matter of grave moral concern. Thus, the convincingness of my arguments in this chapter is not likely to depend on any particularly controversial substantive moral commitments.

There is some disagreement among economists about the effect of increased migration on the wages of native-born workers.⁷ However, there is a consensus among neoclassical economists that increased immigration from poor countries to rich countries would result in large welfare gains for the immigrants themselves. One of the most important factors determining a worker's wage is productivity. The more productive a worker is, the more valuable that worker is to her employer, and the more the employer can afford to pay the worker while still making a

⁶ See chapters 2-5 in Wellman, Christopher Heath, and Phillip Cole. *Debating the Ethics of Immigration: Is There a Right to Exclude?* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

⁷ For example, Sumption and Somerville write, "Public opinion tends to support the view that immigrants take natives' jobs and reduce their wages, yet a large body of research suggests that this is not the case." *The UK's New Europeans: Progress and Challenges Five Years After Accession.* Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010.

profit. For example, if an hour of a worker's labor creates \$8 of value for her employer, then a rational employer would never pay that worker more than \$8 per hour, since the employer would lose money by doing so. If that worker's productivity doubles such that she is capable of producing \$16 of value for her employer per hour of labor, then the upper bound on her wage also doubles to \$16 per hour.

Worker productivity depends significantly on capital and infrastructure, which in turn depend on the quality of institutions. Consider Don, a hypothetical agricultural laborer. Don is an able-bodied man in his mid-twenties who has eight years of formal education and no specialized skills. Since Don quit school at age 13, he has done work plowing, planting, weeding, and picking crops. Consider two vegetable farms where Don could potentially work. Farm X is located in a rich country. It has state-of-the-art equipment, sophisticated chemical fertilizers, it is run somebody with an advanced degree in agricultural science, and the quality and mineral content of its soil are closely monitored and maintained. Farm Y is in a developing country. Most of its tools must be operated by hand or pulled by draught animals. Mismanagement of the country's water supply causes water availability to be unpredictable, which frequently causes reduced yields. The country's roads are in a state of terrible disrepair, and if bad weather hits, they can become impassable for days or weeks at a time, causing vegetables to spoil before they can reach consumers. The police force is corrupt, and truckers often must pay bribes at various checkpoints between farm Y and the city where most of farm Y's vegetables are sold. On both farm X and farm Y, laborers like Don are an indispensable part of what goes into producing vegetables and getting them to consumers. It should be clear that a typical hour of Don's labor at the margin will result in many more vegetables reaching consumers if Don works on farm X than if Don works on farm Y. Because of conditions that are completely beyond Don's control, Don's

labor, when combined with other inputs that go into producing vegetables, is much more productive on farm X than on farm Y. As I illustrated above, a worker's productivity is an important determinant of his wages. Therefore, we can expect that Don will be paid more on farm X than on farm Y. All else equal, it is strongly in Don's interest to work on farm X rather than farm Y. But because of the restrictive immigration policies that prevail throughout most of the world, people like Don who are born into countries where all farms resemble farm Y often do not have the option to work at farms like farm X. One important reason why workers in developing countries earn so much less than workers in developed countries is this lack of access to capital, infrastructure, and functional social and political institutions. (Of course, there are other reasons why workers in rich countries are paid more; for one, workers in rich countries tend to have more knowledge and skills than workers in poor countries.) These differences in capital accumulation, infrastructure, and institutional quality between countries, combined with strong restrictions on international labor movement, give rise to an economic phenomenon called a "place premium".

"Place premium" refers to the fact that an individual's productivity (and therefore earnings) varies significantly depending on the country the individual works in. For example, according to an estimate by development economists Michael Clemens, Claudio Montenegro, and Lant Pritchett, "a typical Bolivian-born, Bolivian-educated, prime-age urban male formal-sector wage worker with moderate schooling makes... [a wage] higher by a factor of 2.7 solely by working in the United States" instead of working in Bolivia.⁸ For some countries, this wage

⁸ That place premiums exist is not controversial in the economics literature. What is much more controversial is whether the existence of place premiums justifies loosening immigration restrictions (since many economists are especially worried about the effect that increased low-skilled immigration has on the wages of low-skilled native workers). For more on place premiums, see Clemens, Michael, Claudio Montenegro, and Lant Pritchett, "The Place Premium:

gap between a worker in the worker's country of origin and an otherwise identical worker in the United States is as high as a factor of 8.4.⁹ Simply by crossing a border, the citizen of a poor country can more (and sometimes significantly more) than *double* his earning potential. This represents a staggering gain in economic welfare for potential poor country to rich country migrants. To illustrate how enormously economically beneficial this potential exponential increase of a poor person's earning potential is, Clemens, Montenegro, and Pritchett helpfully compare it to other anti-poverty programs. For example, they estimate that for a male, low-skilled Bangladeshi worker, the increase in present-value adjusted lifetime earnings from *lifetime* access to microcredit is approximately equal to the increase in lifetime earnings resulting from *one month* of work in the United States.¹⁰

A policy that would allow citizens of poor countries to take advantage of the place premium in richer countries, rather than forcing them to stay in places where they are much less productive, would significantly increase economic efficiency relative to the status quo. One study from 1984 estimates that getting rid of legal restrictions on moving across international borders would cause global GDP to approximately *double*.¹¹ Of course, the elimination of restrictions on crossing international borders is not a realistic policy. My point is merely to illustrate the massive potential economic gains that could result from even modest reductions in

Wage Differences for Identical Workers across the US Border." *The World Bank: Policy Research Working Paper* (2008).

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid*, 55

¹¹ Hamilton, Robert, and John Whalley. "Efficiency and Distributional Implications of Global Restrictions on Labor Mobility." *Journal of Developmental Economics* 14 (1984): 61-75. There is of course bound to be controversy about the methodology used to measure the effect of such a radical policy change. Additionally, this particular study is almost 30 years old. However, it at least gives an indication of the potential magnitude of the effects of increased labor mobility on economic productivity.

immigration restrictions. A 2006 World Bank report included an analysis of the economic effects of a more realistic increase in labor mobility. If an additional 16 million workers from low-income countries went to work in high income countries, the estimated overall economic gain would be \$356 billion.¹² As an economist might say, that represents a lot of dollar bills lying on the street that we are failing to pick up. But the general economic inefficiency of international restrictions on labor mobility is not a matter with which this thesis is directly concerned. More important is that we can say with confidence that, because of the existence of Place Premiums, allowing more workers from poor countries to work in rich countries makes the migrant workers themselves economically better off. This appears to be a strong reason for someone concerned with global poverty to support greater international freedom of movement.

1.2 Pogge's and Brock's Preferred Policies

However, despite what might seem to be strong reasons for reducing immigration restrictions for low-skilled workers as a way of helping the world's least well-off, there is not very much enthusiasm for increased immigration from poor countries to rich countries among prominent contemporary global justice theorists. Thomas Pogge says that advocating for more immigration "is not a good way of discharging our responsibility" to the world's poor.¹³ Gillian Brock writes, "though some improvements could be made through developed countries adopting progressive immigration policies, it is not clear that they outweigh a number of drawbacks that also follow in the wake of increased immigration."¹⁴

¹² World Bank. *Global Economic Prospects: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration*. The World Bank. 2005.

¹³ Pogge, Thomas. "Migration and Poverty." *Citizenship and Exclusion*. Ed. Veit-Michael Bader. New York: St. Martin's, 1997. 12-27, 12.

¹⁴ Brock, Gillian. *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, 212.

Part of the reason that Pogge and Brock oppose increased immigration from poor countries to rich countries is that they think that even if more immigration from poor countries to rich countries might on balance be good for the world's poor, there are other, better ways of helping the poor. I now briefly turn to their suggestions of how to do so.

Pogge famously argues for what he calls a Global Resources Dividend (or GRD for short). To make up for the "uncompensated exclusion" of the poor from the world's resources, Pogge proposes the GRD, which imposes a small tax on all governments that decide to extract natural resources that exist in their territory. Proceeds from this tax would then be distributed to the world's poor to ensure that their basic needs are met. Pogge estimates that the GRD would only have to raise about \$300 billion to accomplish this goal, so the tax could be quite small.¹⁵

Like Pogge, Brock also supports a global redistributive tax that would raise money for poverty alleviation. However, she thinks that some more basic reforms are necessary in order to make such a policy workable. Brock focuses on reforms aimed at reducing tax evasion and increasing transparency. Large companies are often able to evade taxes by using tax havens. This deprives all governments, but especially those of poor countries, of much-needed revenue. Additionally, when poor countries' resources are extracted and sold, the proceeds all too often do not end up with the people. Instead, the countries' corrupt ruling class siphons them off. To combat these problems, Brock suggests that the international community needs to (1) find a way of coordinating tax rates between countries to reduce opportunities for tax evasion and (2) mandate that companies publish what they pay when they purchase resources so that citizens

¹⁵ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 211

(especially those of poor countries) have the information necessary to hold their governments accountable.¹⁶

Brock argues that once transparency and tax reforms have been put into place, the international community should impose some sort of global tax. She declines to endorse one particular tax, but believes that a carbon tax, a currency transaction (or “Tobin”) tax, an air ticket tax, an email tax, a tax on world trade, a tax on international arms trade, and an aviation fuel tax are all promising ideas, and that imposing one or more of these taxes would raise money necessary to provide global public goods and give poor countries more revenue put toward meeting citizens’ basic needs.

So, though Pogge and Brock’s preferred policies differ somewhat from one another, what they have in common is that they both argue for taxes imposed at the global level at least some of the proceeds of which would go toward fulfilling the basic needs of the world’s poorest people.

1.3 Objection: The Problem of Global Poverty is Too Big for Immigration to Solve

I will now turn to some of the main reasons that Pogge and Brock have for their skepticism about increasing global freedom of movement. I will focus on three main anti-immigration arguments.

As the statistics mentioned at the beginning of my introduction indicate, there is a distressingly large number of very poor people in the world. Perhaps the sheer scale of world poverty is simply too big for changes in immigration policy to be of much help. This is the first argument I consider. Thomas Pogge writes, “the number of needy persons in the world... is

¹⁶ Brock, 125-128

simply out of all proportion to the number of needy foreigners which the rich countries admit or could admit.”¹⁷

Pogge gives two reasons for thinking this. The first is that the number of poor people in the world is “out of all proportion” to the number of poor immigrants “which the rich countries admit.”¹⁸ This is true, but what does it show? Just because current immigration policies do not currently allow for nearly enough immigration from poor countries to rich countries to make a significant dent in global poverty numbers does not mean that the policies could not be changed so that they did. The reason why advocates of immigration as a poverty alleviation policy argue for significantly more immigration is that they view current levels of immigration as unacceptably low.

To be fair to Pogge, it is probably better to focus on the second claim he makes to support his conclusion that there are too many poor people in the world for increased immigration to be a promising anti-poverty measure: that rich countries, even if they were willing to admit significantly more immigrants, simply could not do so. It is too bad that Pogge chooses not to support this claim except by citing the numbers of immigrants that legally entered the European Union in 1995, since it is unclear what Pogge means by “could.” Perhaps he means that there is just no room in rich countries for immigration to occur on a massive scale. This is a point that comes up from time to time in American political debates about immigration policy. But it is unconvincing. If the entire population of the United States moved to Texas, leaving the rest of the country completely vacant, then the population density of the state of Texas would be about the same as the current population density of New Jersey. Some people might worry that a large increase in population density would leave rich countries without enough room for leisure

¹⁷ Pogge, “Migration and Poverty,” 14

¹⁸ *ibid*

activities or to grow food for the population. With a large enough population this would obviously be a legitimate concern. But the populations of most rich countries are nowhere close to reaching a level at which these sorts of concerns are pressing. Anybody who has traveled across the middle of France has seen that there is lots of wilderness and farmland in France. In fact, France is one of the world's leading agricultural exporters. If the United States had the same population density as France, its total population would be well over one billion. We have plenty of space here for more people. Many other wealthy countries do as well.

Perhaps Pogge means that rich countries are not currently equipped to deal with the huge increases in population that large-scale immigration would entail. Where would people live? How would they get around? Where would their children go to school? There are clearly challenges associated with rapid population increases, but I do not think that they are so great that they justify abandoning increased immigration as a poverty alleviation policy, given its great potential to help the world's poor. If hundreds of millions of immigrants were dropped into rich countries by helicopter tomorrow, it is only reasonable to expect chaos. But immigration flows from poor to rich countries could be increased somewhat gradually to allow rich countries time to make necessary adjustments. Between the years 2000 and 2009, the population of Raleigh, NC grew by 40%.¹⁹ My understanding is that this growth has posed some challenges to the city of Raleigh, but none that are insurmountable. Of course, the sort of immigration that I am talking about is importantly different from the intra-national migration that was the primary source of Raleigh's rapid population growth, since it involves large numbers of low-skilled workers from very different cultures.

¹⁹ Koebler, Jason. "10 Metro Areas With the Largest Population Growth." *US News*. U.S. News & World Report, 06 Apr. 2011.

An interesting comparison is the massive immigration from the former Soviet bloc to Israel that took place near the end of the twentieth century. Between 1989 and 2002, 1.1 million citizens of former Soviet Bloc countries took advantage of the Law of Return to immigrate to Israel.²⁰ In 1985, just before this era of mass immigration, Israel's total population was 4.3 million.²¹ Unsurprisingly, this wave of immigrants overwhelmed Israel's existing infrastructure. In particular, there was a severe housing shortage. A 1991 Los Angeles Times article tells of recent Russian immigrants living in converted chicken coops because they were unable to find suitable housing.²² Additionally, there was a large spike in unemployment. As word spread to prospective immigrants in former Soviet countries that there were no homes or jobs in Israel, immigration rates dropped off.²³ In the next few years, Israel made necessary adjustments to accommodate more immigrants: homes were built, the economy grew, and unemployment declined. In the decades since the early 1990s, housing density, labor force participation rates, and life expectancy of immigrants from former Soviet countries have begun to converge with the housing density, labor force participation rates, and life expectancy of the veteran Israeli population.²⁴

The case of Israeli immigrants from former Soviet countries shows that large waves of immigration from relatively poor countries to relatively rich countries are possible and do not wreak havoc on the receiving country. I do not deny that there will be significant challenges for policymakers associated with large-scale migration from poor countries to rich countries. But

²⁰ Karasenty, Yogev, and Shmuel Rosner. "What Million Missing Israelis?" *Foreign Policy* 28 July 2011.

²¹ *CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion*. Rep. Paris: International Energy Agency, 2012.

²² Williams, Daniel. "Unemployment, Poor Housing Slow Immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel." *Los Angeles Times*, 29 Dec. 1991.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Yaffe, Nurit, and Dorith Tal. *Immigration to Israel from the Former Soviet Union*. Rep. Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Immigration Absorption, 2001.

there are challenges associated with almost any significant change in policy. If critics want to show that challenges associated with significant increases in migration are great enough to make increased migration an all things considered bad policy option, then they need to give much stronger evidence in support of their view than what Pogge provides.

1.4 Objection: Immigration Fails to Help the World's Worst Off

Looking at the kinds of people who are among those who are willing and able to take advantage of opportunities to emigrate yields a second kind of argument for why those concerned about the plight of the world's poor should not advocate increased immigration. Most immigrants that rich countries currently admit are not among the world's worst off before immigrating. Pogge suggests that this is because if one wants to emigrate to a rich country, "it helps a very great deal, in the scramble to gain admission, to have money for bribing officials, for paying smugglers, and for hiring a lawyer; to have some education, professional skills, and language training."²⁵ People with these advantageous characteristics, however, are usually reasonably well off. Additionally, when these immigrants send remissions to their families back home in their poor native countries, the families receiving the money are usually not among the least well-off citizens of the country. According to Brock, "direct effects on the very poor through remittances may be limited."²⁶ I will address these arguments in turn.

One reason why most immigrants are not among the least well-off in their countries of origin is that rich people have more money with which to grease the wheels of the immigration system than poor people. This is undeniably true, but how is it relevant to Pogge's claim that *immigration itself* is not a good poverty alleviation policy? One difficulty in designing just public

²⁵ Pogge, "Migration and Poverty," 14

²⁶ Brock, 205

policy is that well-intentioned policies tend to be corrupted and favor the interests of the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor. Almost any sort of policy reform will be vulnerable to this problem. Thus, the fact that one particular actually existing policy tends to be skewed toward the interests of the rich rather than the poor is not a convincing reason to conclude that the general policy in question cannot, with some reform, be used to help the poor. What would qualify as a good reason to draw such a conclusion is if the policy in question was *more* likely to be captured by the wealthy and powerful and turned against the poor than some alternative policy. But Pogge provides no reason why we should think that immigration policy is more likely to be hijacked by the rich and powerful than Pogge's preferred alternative of taxation and redistribution. Pogge himself points out elsewhere that programs with the ostensible goal of promoting development in poor countries usually end up allocating money according to the perceived national self-interest of rich donor countries.²⁷ In contemporary American political discourse, the fact that Warren Buffett is taxed at a lower rate than his secretary is frequently invoked to illustrate the extent to which the American tax regime has been skewed in favor of the rich. But if these facts do not necessarily entail that Brock's and Pogge's preferred policies of taxation combined with redistribution are not a good way of securing the human rights of the world's poor, it is unclear why Pogge thinks that the fact that current immigration policy tends to favor the rich over the poor supports his claim that immigration is not a promising poverty alleviation policy. If immigration policies were reformed in a way that made it easier to immigrate, that itself would reduce the amount of resources needed to successfully immigrate.

A related but in my view more challenging objection that Pogge makes is that even if rich countries open their doors to significantly more poor foreigners than they currently do, it is not

²⁷ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 8

usually the very poor who immigrate. If we reflect for a moment on the situations that the global poor face, it would not be surprising if Pogge's claim were true. It is difficult and expensive to move from one place to another. The difficulty and cost of moving increases with distance, and many of the world's poor are located a long way away from the rich countries to which they could potentially migrate. There are many poor people who are willing to go to incredible lengths and incur extraordinary costs to relocate to places that they believe offer better opportunities than their home countries. But Pogge is primarily concerned with people who are not just poor, but truly destitute. A person who is starving, severely malnourished, or very sick is unlikely to be able to make the long journey that most migrations require. Clemens and Pritchett present evidence suggesting that the movement of low-skilled workers from poor countries to the United States primarily results in direct benefits to people who would make less than \$10 per day if they were unable to leave their native countries.²⁸ This may support Pogge's point: the people with whom Pogge is primarily concerned, those who live on less than \$1 or \$2 per day, are usually not the direct beneficiaries of immigration (although according to the evidence that Clemens and Pritchett present, it is likely that immigration to the United States has directly benefited a non-trivial number of Haitians who otherwise would live in destitute poverty).²⁹ As a caveat, I would point out that we should be careful about assuming, based on current immigration flows, that the destitute cannot be direct beneficiaries of reduced immigration restrictions to rich countries. As Pogge points out and as I discuss above, current immigration laws, like most policies, favor the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor. Thus, it is

²⁸ Clemens, Michael A., and Lant Pritchett. "Income per Natural: Measuring Development for People Rather Than Places." *Population and Development Review* 34.3 (2008): 395-434.

²⁹ *ibid*

possible that if legal barriers to immigration were reduced, then more desperately poor people would benefit from immigration than currently available empirical evidence would suggest.

However, I grant that it is probably true that people in severe poverty will likely not be primary direct beneficiaries of immigration reforms allowing more people from poor countries to work in rich countries. But what about indirect effects? I consider two indirect effects of immigration of low-skilled workers from poor countries to rich countries. The first, which Pogge and Brock do not consider, is the reduction of poor countries' domestic supply of low-skilled labor. The second, which Pogge and Brock do consider, is remittances.

One challenge for poor countries in the early stages of development is that they tend to have large numbers of low skilled workers who are either unemployed or severely underemployed, working in subsistence agriculture or in the informal sector. I discussed above how labor productivity sets an upper bound on workers' wages. According to conventional economic theory, the lower bound on a worker's wage for a given job depends on how much that worker can make doing something else. If employer A offers worker W a job that pays \$8 per hour, but worker W can get \$10 per hour working for employer B, then employer A will have to increase her offer to at least \$10 per hour in order to attract worker W. (Here we hold all else equal, of course; the situation becomes more complicated when, for example, the jobs are different levels of difficulty, when one job is more dangerous than the other, and when there are transaction costs.) Of course, whether or not employer A will be willing to pay worker W \$10 per hour rather than \$8 per hour depends on whether or not there are other workers who would be willing to take the job for \$8 per hour and who would be capable of doing the same quality of work as worker W.

Therefore, when countries are in the early stages of development, one significant drag on wage increases for employed low-skilled workers is the existence of a large number of low-skilled, impoverished, unemployed or underemployed workers who, since their alternatives are so grim, are desperate enough to work for extremely low pay. Hence, for wages in poor countries to increase, the unemployment rate must decrease. This can take years. During this time, people suffer. The lucky people who are employed work long, difficult hours for little money. The unlucky people who are unemployed or underemployed must struggle to meet their most basic needs in the informal sector of the economy. It is in this category of unemployed and underemployed low-skilled workers in developing countries where many of the destitute people with which Pogge and Brock are primarily concerned are found. The families and children of people in this category are also likely to be destitute. For many of these people, the sooner they can get jobs in the formal sector of the economy, and the faster that their wages can increase once they do succeed in finding work in the formal sector, the sooner these people will be able to make significant progress in improving their living conditions.³⁰

Thus, although it may be true that low-skilled workers who migrate to rich countries are generally not themselves in desperate poverty, they do compete for a limited number of low-skilled jobs with people who are in desperate poverty. If increased migration can reduce the overall number of low-skilled workers in poor countries, it is likely that people who are currently living in destitute poverty will benefit, even if they are not the ones who migrate. I think that the

³⁰ Here I assume standard economic definitions of the “informal sector” and the “formal sector” of the economy. The informal sector of the economy is not monitored by the government, and therefore is not taxed and is not included in calculations of a country’s gross domestic product. Jobs in the formal sector of the economy thus can be any jobs in the primary, secondary, or tertiary sectors of the economy, such factory jobs, agricultural jobs, service jobs, and so on.

potentially beneficial indirect effects that I have described are quite plausible,³¹ since they are a straightforward implication of commonly accepted economic theory. Anybody who is concerned with improving the lot of the world's least well-off should give these beneficial indirect effects of migration serious consideration, which Pogge and Brock do not.

I will now turn my attention to the second indirect effect of poor country to rich country migration: remittances. Direct beneficiaries of remissions are usually family members of immigrants working in rich countries. Both Pogge and Brock take a dismissive attitude toward remittances, largely because the families of remittance-sending immigrants, like most immigrants themselves before they leave their home countries, tend not to be desperately poor. Thus, while remittances may make poor people better off, they likely do not tend to directly benefit the least well-off citizens of poor countries with which Pogge and Brock are primarily concerned.

In my view, the strongest argument to be made in favor of remittances is that, by increasing the income of the poor (though not destitute), they increase private consumption,

³¹ John Stuart Mill makes a similar argument about low wages in nineteenth century England, suggesting that the emigration of some unskilled laborers to the colonies will raise the wages of those who remain in England. See Mill, John Stuart, *Principles of Political Economy with some of their Applications to Social Philosophy*. William J. Ashley, ed. 1909. Library of Economics and Liberty. 18 February 2013. <<http://www.econlib.org/library/Mill/mlP26.html>>. Also, see Kapur, Devesh, "Remittances: The New Development Mantra?" Paper prepared for the G-24 Technical Meeting, <www.unctad.org/en/docs/gdsmdpbg2420045_en.pdf>, 12. Additionally, Lant Pritchett has done work related to what I discuss here. Pritchett argues that if restrictions on labor mobility are low, then a drop in demand for labor in a geographic region will cause outward migration, creating a "Ghost" region with lower population than before. However, if restrictions on labor mobility are high, then a drop in demand for labor in a geographic region will be offset by a drop in wages, creating a "Zombie" region in which many people are trapped in an area with few employment opportunities relative to the population. Pritchett argues that Ghosts are usually preferable to Zombies. See Pritchett, Lant. *Let Their People Come: Breaking the Gridlock on International Labor Mobility*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, 2006, especially chapter 2.

which increases demand for goods and service and, as Brock notes, promote “opportunities for further jobs and new markets. When remittances are spent on consumption of domestically produced goods or services there can be multiplier effects.”³² Clemens writes that, even with relatively low current levels of immigration, “remittances are now several times larger than global flows of foreign aid.”³³ If immigration flows were dramatically increased, then remittances would play an even greater role in increasing wealth of the citizens of poor countries. This would in turn have a much greater effect on demand for domestic goods and services in poor countries than do remittances at current levels. The domestic jobs created by this increased demand for domestic goods and services, combined with reduced size of the domestic low-skilled labor force that I discuss above, are significant and plausible ways in which movement of low-skilled workers from poor countries to rich countries could have strongly beneficial effects for even the most destitute citizens of poor countries.

1.5 Objection: The Effects of Remittances on Life Back Home

Not only do remittances often not go to the very poor, but there are also worries about potential negative effects that they may have on immigrants’ home countries. This is the third argument (or perhaps more accurately, group of arguments) against immigration as a poverty alleviation policy that I consider. Recipients of remittances may become dependent on them and choose not to hold their own jobs. Recipients of remittances are also more likely to want to emigrate themselves than the general population, which makes it harder for local, self-sufficient economies to develop in immigrants’ home countries. Additionally, remittances tend to fall off

³² Brock, 205

³³ Clemens, Michael. “A Labor Mobility Agenda for Development.” CGD Working Paper 201. Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development. 2010.

over time. Immigrants remit the most of their earnings three to five years after moving to their host country; as time away from their home country becomes greater than this, remittances tend to fall off.³⁴

Pogge speculates that remittances could actually make conditions worse for people living in destitute poverty. Some money from remittances, according to Pogge, “will... be used to cement and entrench the oppression of the poorest by Third-World ‘elites’... these funds are far more likely to increase than to reduce domestic inequality in the poor countries and therefore are a mixed blessing at best.”³⁵ These are strong claims. It seems to me that they should only be accepted if accompanied by strong evidence. Unfortunately, Pogge does not provide any. Absent evidence, I see no reason to believe that the low-skilled immigrants with which this thesis is primarily concerned and the families of those low-skilled immigrants are part of the oppressive “Third-World elite,” even if they may tend to be slightly better off than their poorest co-nationals.

Brock’s criticisms of remittances are, I think, more plausible than Pogge’s, but for the most part are also unconvincing. Brock worries that remittances reduce recipients’ labor force participation. She writes, “the inflow of funds [from remittances] can create dependence for recipients.”³⁶ By using the word “dependence,” which has clear negative connotations, Brock seems to assume that reduced labor force participation is necessarily a bad thing. But I do not think that this assumption is warranted. First, as I argue above, reduced competition for low-skill jobs may well be beneficial for destitute people who desperately need such jobs. Second, it seems to me that having the ability to work less and spend more time on other projects is often a

³⁴ Brock, 206-207

³⁵ Pogge, “Migration and Poverty,” 15

³⁶ Brock, 207

positive development in the life of the person who is able to make such a choice. I see no reason to believe that it would not be a positive development for citizens of developing countries.

Brock proceeds to argue that recipients of remittances are more likely to want to emigrate themselves, which “often has the effect of encouraging more people to emigrate, consequently crippling the region’s ability to develop its own economy.”³⁷ More clarity is necessary before this claim can be evaluated. What does it mean for a region to “develop its own economy”? In the context of a discussion of immigration and remittances, it presumably means that a region is able to provide local jobs for its residents so that they do not have to go to another country in search of work. Some people seem to think that there is something intuitively desirable about a community being able to provide employment opportunities for its native residents so that they may stay if they so choose. But even those who have such an intuition must recognize that there are other important countervailing factors to consider as well. People tend not to endure long journeys to foreign countries for no good reason. They tend to undertake such journeys in order to take advantage of opportunities that are significantly better than those available in the places that they leave. So even if we grant that there is something valuable about preserving opportunities for people in their home regions, we must recognize that sometimes the cost of preserving these opportunities is quite dear: hampering poor people’s ability to take advantage of opportunities in other places that poor people themselves judge to be significantly better. I am skeptical that there are many cases in which the moral desirability of the former outweighs the moral desirability of the latter.

The final reason Brock gives for doubting the potential of remissions to improve the conditions in poor countries is that “[t]ime spent away can dramatically affect the willingness to

³⁷ Brock, 206

remit.” After three to five years, “remittances often fall off considerably.”³⁸ Even if this is a legitimate concern, it does not entail that we should support restrictive immigration policies. As Brock notes, one possible response to the tendency of remittances to fall off after a certain time period is for rich countries to only grant temporary work visas. This way, immigrants would have to return home after a few years away and the remittances would not fall off. This strikes me as plausible response to Brock’s worry. I am not convinced that it would be the *best* policy, but because of space constraints, I leave further elaboration for another time.

1.6. The Urgency of Ending Global Poverty

Poverty is an urgent problem. This is an important reason why Pogge and Brock think that the optimal set of poverty alleviation policies is global taxation combined with programs that redistribute to the world’s poorest people and fund basic public goods and services in poor countries. People are dying every day. We must act immediately. If Pogge and Brock’s preferred policies were put in place, and if they worked the way Pogge and Brock hope (a big if), then poverty would soon be a thing of the past. The same cannot be said for increased immigration. The indirect benefits of increased immigration for the desperately poor that I highlight in this chapter would take time to come about. Additionally, increased immigration is politically unrealistic. Even modest increases in immigration are politically unpopular in rich countries.

But however undeniably urgent a moral problem severe poverty may be, it most likely will not go away quickly. Although radical reforms to immigration policy are unlikely, it is also unlikely that proposals like Pogge’s and Brock’s will be put into place in the near future. And even if they are implemented, how confident should we be that they will actually succeed rather

³⁸ Brock, 207

than falling prey to corruption by the rich and powerful like so many other well-intentioned policy reforms? I do not intend these remarks to be criticisms of Pogge and Brock. To both of their credits, they devote a lot of thought to considering how institutional schemes could be designed to avoid this problem. My point is only that if severe global poverty is ever to be eradicated, it will probably not happen quickly, and is unlikely to be the result of just one set of policy reforms. Thus, just because poverty-alleviating immigration reforms are politically unrealistic does not by itself entail that advocates of the global poor should not advocate them. After all, we have to start somewhere. It is not pleasant to take the long view on the problem of global poverty. However, we may have no choice.

1.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that allowing more low-skilled workers from poor countries to migrate to rich countries is a potentially important aspect of a broader set of policies aimed at reducing (and hopefully eliminating) global poverty. Specifically, I have tried to address some of Thomas Pogge and Gillian Brock's concerns that increased immigration is not a promising way to help the world's most severely impoverished people. In particular, giving low-skilled workers more opportunities to migrate from poor countries to rich countries is likely to have highly beneficial indirect effects on the world's worst off. I have not been able to address all of the concerns that Pogge and Brock (not to mention others) have with proposals to increase immigration, but I hope that I have done enough to show that immigration deserves more serious consideration as a poverty alleviation policy than it usually gets.

If my argument in this chapter is successful, then it means that the restrictive immigration policies that are nearly ubiquitous in the world today have disastrous consequences for the well-being of the world's poorest people. What can we do to improve the situation? Unfortunately,

support among the general public for reducing immigration restrictions is weak. In a 2011 Gallup poll, 43% of Americans said that present levels of immigration should be decreased, 35% said they should be kept the same, and only 18% said they should be increased.³⁹ In 2011, 1.06 million people obtained permanent resident status in the United States and an additional 3.39 million people entered the United States as temporary workers and family members of temporary workers.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the total population of the United States is over 300 million. It is unfortunate that support for increased immigration among the American public is so low despite the fact that current immigration flows are already quite small relative to the total population. (It is also unfortunate that citizens of other rich countries tend not to be much more supportive than Americans of proposals to increase immigration.)

Clearly, there is a difficult political problem associated with reducing immigration restrictions. It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to give this problem comprehensive treatment. However, I will consider the ethics of one controversial policy that, as I explain in the introduction, may be a politically realistic (compared to alternatives) way of reducing immigration restrictions: guest worker programs. This is the task to which I turn in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: A Defense of Guest Worker Programs

2.1 Relational Egalitarianism

The critics of guest worker programs that I discuss in this chapter are relational egalitarians. Explanations of relational egalitarianism usually begin by explaining what relational

³⁹ Jones, Jeffrey. "Americans' Views on Immigration Holding Steady." *Gallup Politics*. Gallup, 22 June 2011.

⁴⁰ United States. Department of Homeland Security. Office of Immigration Statistics. *2011 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: 2012.

egalitarianism is not. Prominent twentieth century political philosophers such as Richard Arneson, G. A. Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, and Thomas Nagel defend different versions of luck egalitarianism. It is a simple fact about the human condition that different individuals have different life prospects partially because of luck. This seems unfair. Luck egalitarians think justice is about minimizing this unfairness.

While minimizing unfairness seems like a plausible goal for somebody concerned with equality, Elizabeth Anderson, a prominent relational egalitarian, argues that luck egalitarians have lost sight of what the point of equality really is. According to Anderson, the primary focus of egalitarianism should be “the relationships within which goods are distributed, not only the distribution of goods themselves.”⁴¹ More specifically, “Negatively, egalitarians seek to abolish oppression—that is, forms of social relationship by which some people dominate, exploit, marginalize, demean, and inflict violence upon others.... Positively, egalitarians seek a social order in which persons stand in relations of equality.”⁴² Understood this way, relational egalitarianism has important implications for how inequality matters in the context of international justice. Relational egalitarians argue that inequality between people who live in the same country is more concerning than inequality between people who live in different countries. To somebody with cosmopolitan sympathies, this may seem implausible. If all people have equal moral standing, then shouldn’t global, rather than national, inequality be what is most relevant in global justice?

Relational egalitarians have a response to this cosmopolitan line of criticism: there are morally relevant differences between inequalities that exist between citizens of the same country and inequalities that exist between people who are not citizens of the same country. Inequality

⁴¹ Anderson, Elizabeth S. "What Is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109.2 (1999): 287-337, 314

⁴² *Ibid*, 312

between co-nationals is especially concerning because people who are citizens of the same country are related to each other in a way that people who are citizens of different countries are not. To illustrate this point, Andrew Altman and Christopher Heath Wellman, who approvingly cite Anderson's version of relational egalitarianism, ask us to consider two instances of inequality. In the first instance, there is society A, in which everybody is equally affluent, and society B, in which everybody is equally poor. A and B are on opposite sides of the world and have never had any contact with each other. In the second instance, there is only society C, in which there is a group of citizens as affluent as those in society A and another group of citizens as poor as those in society B. We should worry much more about the instance of inequality involving society C than the one involving A and B, Altman and Wellman argue, because the fact that inequality in society C exists within a single political community creates the possibility of marginalization, oppression, exploitation, and other problematic forms of social relation that could not exist between citizens of A and citizens of B.⁴³

In addition to their discussion of Anderson's views, Altman and Wellman also draw on Michael Walzer's account of relational egalitarianism (which was developed before Anderson's, and before the view even came to be known as relational egalitarianism). Walzer writes that according to his version of egalitarianism, "It's not the fact that there are rich and poor that generates egalitarian politics but the fact that the rich 'grind the faces of the poor,' impose their poverty upon them, command their deferential behavior.... The experience of subordination—of personal subordination, above all—lies behind the vision of equality."⁴⁴ Altman and Wellman recognize that this account is somewhat different from Anderson's, and indeed it is. What the

⁴³ Altman, Andrew, and Christopher Heath Wellman. *A Liberal Theory of International Justice*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, 131

⁴⁴ Walzer, Michael. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. New York: Basic, 1983, xiii

two approaches share is that according to both, “equality, as a demand of justice, must be understood in a way that is sensitive to the relationships within which social goods are distributed.”⁴⁵ Altman and Wellman say that preventing oppression is the primary focus of relational egalitarianism. For example, they write, “[a]ccording to the brand of relational egalitarianism we favor, the key issue concerns which inequalities facilitate oppressive relationships.”⁴⁶

Because of the central role that oppression plays in the account of relational egalitarianism that Altman and Wellman endorse, the present discussion depends significantly on what exactly we mean by “oppression.” Although I find it difficult to discern exactly what the word “oppression” means for Anderson or Altman and Wellman, I offer this as a formulation: “the exercise of power by one person or group of people over another person or group of people in a way that objectionably disadvantages the latter.” This way of understanding of the word “oppression” is, I think, a reasonable approximation of what ordinary speakers mean when they use the word.

A careful reading of Walzer, however, reveals that he has a somewhat different understanding of the main focus of relational egalitarianism than Anderson. Altman and Wellman recognize this, writing that the difference between Anderson and Walzer is that “[t]he wrong is variously identified as oppression [for Anderson] or domination [for Walzer].”⁴⁷ However, this sentence and a brief footnote are all that they devote to acknowledging the difference between Anderson’s and Walzer’s views. But the differences between Anderson’s and Walzer’s views are important and significant.

⁴⁵ Altman and Wellman, 132

⁴⁶ *ibid*, 133

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 132.

Consider, for example, the Walzer quote from above. Some of the concerns that Walzer articulates seem to be related to oppression; for example, the concern that the rich impose poverty upon the poor. However, Walzer seems to show even more concern for something different: that the rich “grind the faces of the poor... [and] command their deferential behavior.” Walzer emphasizes the “experience of subordination.”⁴⁸ If I have understood the concept of “oppression” correctly, then it does not exactly capture these worries. Group A experiencing subordination at the hands of another group B does not necessarily entail that B is taking advantage of A, exploiting A, or that B is making its own members better off by making members of A worse off. The experience of subordination of one group by another covers a much broader range of cases—in particular, cases in which one person or group of persons does not stand in a relation of *social* equality to another person or group of persons.

It seems to me that relational egalitarianism, in the various versions discussed here, encompasses a family of related but distinct concerns. To set up my discussion of guest worker programs, I want to clearly delineate two categories of problems arising from unequal relationships. Both articulate concerns that fall under the scope of relational egalitarianism. However, for my purposes, there are important differences between them.

The first category I will call *oppressive relational inequalities*. Into this category fall cases in which one person or group of people has a relation with another person or group of people that allows the former to exploit or take advantage of the latter (or to oppress the latter, as I define oppression above). A contemporary example of an oppressive relational inequality would be the disparity of influence on the American political process between the 1% (the richest 1% of United States citizens) and the 99% (all United States citizens not among the

⁴⁸ Walzer, xiii

richest 1%) that the Occupy Wall Street movement has recently highlighted. The idea here is that the 1% rigs the political system in a way that promotes its own economic self-interest at the expense of the 99%. (I take no stand here on whether this is an accurate account of what happens in our political system; I claim only that *if* it were true, it would be a good example of oppressive relational inequality.)

The second category I will call *personally degrading relational inequalities*. Into this category fall cases in which one person (or group of people) fails to treat another person (or group of people) as his social equal. An example of an interaction that would likely constitute a personally degrading relational inequality would be owners of an inn who refuse to rent a room to a same-sex couple because the owners are opposed to homosexuality.⁴⁹ The owners treat the same-sex couple differently than they would treat another couple on the basis of morally arbitrary features,⁵⁰ thereby denying the couple the respect and recognition of equal social standing that they deserve in virtue of being persons. Oppressive and personally degrading relational inequalities may overlap, and an unequal relationship that begins as one may eventually come to include elements of the other. However, I think that there is an important conceptual distinction between the two, and that it is a distinction worth making when considering the implications of relational egalitarian insights on guest worker programs. The crucial point is that an oppressive inequality need not involve personal degradation.

⁴⁹ I say “may” because specifics matter here. It is perhaps possible that an inn owner would refuse service to a same sex couple because she disapproves of their lifestyle and doesn’t want them around her children, but that she can do this without viewing the couple as subordinate to her in a sense that might worry relational egalitarians. But counterexamples aside, I think this case captures what would typically qualify as a personally degrading relational inequality.

⁵⁰ By “morally arbitrary features,” I refer to characteristics that could not be referenced in a sound moral justification for treating one person or group of people differently from another person or group of people.

While Altman and Wellman (and Wellman alone in *Debating the Ethics of Immigration: Is there a Right to Exclude?*) seem to focus mostly on oppressive relational inequalities, they sometimes also refer to personally degrading relational inequalities (for example, in their approving citation of Walzer, and in an analogy that Wellman employs that I discuss below). Walzer, for his part, seems to focus primarily on personally degrading inequalities, although he does discuss oppressive inequalities as well (for example, with his worry about the rich “imposing [the poor’s] poverty upon them”). At any rate, keeping the distinction between the oppressive and personally degrading relational inequalities in mind will help me to show what I think is wrong with some arguments that Walzer and Wellman make against guest worker programs.

2.2 Walzer and Wellman on Guest Workers

In his discussion of guest worker programs, Walzer considers Western European countries that, during the time that he was writing *Spheres of Justice*, habitually brought in low-skilled laborers from lower-income countries. Affluent Western European countries with strong labor unions had a hard time attracting domestic workers to low-paying, physically difficult and dangerous jobs. However, for the overall functioning of the country, it was necessary to find people willing to do these jobs. An obvious solution was to establish guest worker programs that imported workers willing to take jobs that native workers were not. The guest workers that Walzer discusses lived under harsh conditions relative to citizens of the countries in which they were working. They worked long hours, were not given access to social services, and their residency was conditional on having employment.⁵¹

⁵¹ Walzer, 56-57

The programs in question were consciously designed so that the workers did not have opportunities to integrate themselves into local culture and society or build and maintain social relationships. For example, Walzer writes that the workers were “either prevented or discouraged from bringing dependents along with them, and they [were] housed in barracks, segregated by sex, on the outskirts of the cities where they work[ed].”⁵² As is the case with any guest worker program, the workers were not given the right to vote. Because of this lack of political voice, the guest workers Walzer discusses experience the state “as a pervasive and frightening power that shapes their lives and regulates their every move—and never asks for their opinion.... [The guest workers] are typically an exploited or oppressed class as well, and they are exploited or oppressed at least in part because they are disenfranchised, incapable of organizing effectively for self-defense.”⁵³ According to Walzer’s analysis, keeping the workers from improving their condition was part of the point of having a guest worker program: wealthy European countries established guest worker programs in order to find people who were willing to work for lower wages and in worse conditions than domestic workers. If the workers had the political and social standing necessary to make things better for themselves, then their employers would eventually have to pay them more and improve their working conditions, which is exactly the situation these wealthy European states sought to avoid.

The guest worker programs that Walzer analyzes were obviously problematic from the perspective of relational egalitarianism. They made possible a range of both oppressive and personally degrading relational inequalities. The denial of political and social standing of guest workers was for the express purpose of preventing them from improving their wages or working conditions. This was an obvious instance of oppressive relational inequality. Assuming, again,

⁵² *ibid*, 57

⁵³ *ibid*, 59

that Walzer's description of the situation is accurate, European host countries then took advantage of guest workers' disadvantaged situations. An instance of personally subordinating relational inequality in Walzer's discussion of guest workers that would exist to some extent in any guest worker arrangement is the denial of citizenship rights itself along with a lack of a clear path to citizenship. Citizenship is socially significant, and having some people in a society who are full citizens with others who are denied citizenship creates inequalities that give the relational egalitarian cause for concern.

Most citizens of the United States of America are patriots to at least some extent. There is something about their very status as "Americans" (using the term narrowly to refer to United States citizens) that makes them feel proud and fosters a bond between them and their fellow Americans. Allowing people to become temporary members of American society, and not granting them the status of citizenship, restricts their access to patriotic relational bonds and the sense of pride that many people feel in virtue of being full citizens of the United States. To be clear, I am not saying that a non-citizen is incapable of patriotism or of fellow feeling for other individuals in a political community. But having lived most of my life in the United States, I think that there is something about the status of citizenship itself that many people take to be an important part of their self-conceptions and that many people feel binds them to others who have the same status. If this phenomenological claim about citizenship is plausible, then the denial of citizenship status to guest workers is an example of personal degradation that, for relational egalitarians, it is objectionable.⁵⁴ Although my main purpose in this chapter is to show why

⁵⁴ As Wellman points out, another (related) reason in addition to the one I mention here that denial of citizenship may create personally degrading relational inequalities is that the right to vote has symbolic importance such that being denied it may constitute a "psychologically damaging slap in the face." See Wellman in Wellman, Christopher Heath, and Phillip Cole.

relational egalitarians should be more amenable to guest worker programs than Wellman and (especially) Walzer are, I do not wish to deny that there is room for legitimate relational egalitarian criticism of guest worker programs. To the contrary, I insist that there is.

Having granted the legitimacy of Walzer's concerns with the guest worker programs that he considers, and having acknowledged that some of these concerns may apply to guest worker programs in general, I will now discuss where I think that Walzer is, on relational egalitarian grounds, mistaken. He writes,

Men and women are either subject to the state's authority, or they are not; and if they are subject, they must be given a say, and ultimately an equal say, in what that authority does. Democratic citizens, then, have a choice: if they want to bring in new workers, they must be prepared to enlarge their own membership; if they are unwilling to accept new members, they must find ways within the limits of the domestic labor market to get socially necessary work done. And those are their only choices.⁵⁵

The first sentence of this quotation is baffling for a couple of reasons. First, Walzer's use of the word "subject" is odd. As a citizen of the United States, I am subject to the political authority of the United States. But if I go to Paris, then I am subject to France's political authority, my lack of French citizenship notwithstanding. The second reason that the sentence is baffling is that it is actually false. If I visit Paris for a week, even though I am subject to France's political authority,

Debating the Ethics of Immigration: Is There a Right to Exclude? Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011, 136.

⁵⁵ Walzer, 61

it does not seem that I deserve a say (and I certainly do not deserve an equal say) in what France does with its political authority.

Putting those problems aside, the main reason for rejecting Walzer's strong claim about the impermissibility of guest worker programs is this: just because relational egalitarians have reasons to worry about guest worker programs, does not support a conclusion nearly as strong as the claim that democratic states must not allow guest workers at all. After a brief discussion of Wellman's position on guest worker programs, I will spend the rest of the chapter giving argumentative support for this assertion that Walzer's position on guest worker programs is mistaken.

2.3 A Relational Egalitarian Defense of Guest Worker Programs

Wellman agrees that Walzer's conclusion is too strong. According to Wellman, there is no necessary problem with guest worker programs that only allow immigrants into the host country "for a duly limited period" of time. (Wellman does not specify exactly how long a period qualifies as duly limited.) At the same time, "we would want to examine carefully arrangements on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the workers are not put in positions where they are objectionably vulnerable to oppression."⁵⁶ To be fair to Wellman, he reasonably acknowledges that it is possible for the beneficial consequences of a situation to outweigh concerns about relational inequalities.⁵⁷ This makes Wellman much harder to pin down than Walzer. However, I think that Wellman's position can be criticized on the same grounds as Walzer's. To make a convincing relational egalitarian argument against guest worker programs, it is not enough to show that guest worker programs are instances of worrisome inequalities. They must show that

⁵⁶ Wellman, 138

⁵⁷ *ibid*, 141

inequalities associated with guest worker programs are more worrisome than inequalities associated with keeping those who would participate in a guest worker program from immigrating at all. In this section, I argue not that beneficial consequences associated with allowing temporary workers to enter the country should outweigh relational egalitarian worries about guest worker programs, but rather that there are good *specifically relational egalitarian reasons* for giving non-citizen workers a legal way to enter the country for work purposes.

The main flaw in the relational egalitarian critiques of guest worker programs that I have been considering is that they seem to assume (or sometimes simply assert) that relational egalitarian concerns are necessarily more significant for relations between people who live in the same territory than they are for relations that cross international boundaries. It would be unfair to say that Walzer and Wellman completely fail to see that relational egalitarian concern transcends borders; certainly Wellman, at least, recognizes this. But he does not seem to recognize the extent to which the international status quo should raise concerns for relational egalitarians. Recall Altman and Wellman's discussion of inter-society inequality versus intra-society inequality: suppose that everyone in society A is rich and everyone in separate society B is poor. Now, suppose that the same disparity that exists between A and B exists within society C. Because members of society C occupy the same political community, "they occupy relationships that are affected by these inequalities,"⁵⁸ and so the inequality that exists in society C is more concerning than the inequality that exists between A and B. Altman and Wellman are careful to stipulate that "no one in either A or B knows anything of the other society's existence, since they are on opposite sides of the earth and have never had any contact."⁵⁹ There is nothing wrong with this stipulation if the goal is to clarify what is distinctive about the relational egalitarian approach

⁵⁸ Altman and Wellman, 131

⁵⁹ *ibid*

versus other kinds of egalitarianism (which is primarily what Altman and Wellman are doing in this passage). However, it is clear that in the real world, even societies that are geographically separated have contact with each other, and are certainly aware of each other's existence. Thus, relationships between members of the same political community are not the only relationships that are affected by inequalities. Relationships between members of different political communities may be affected by inequalities as well. (Of course, it may still be true that inequalities between co-nationals are more concerning than inequalities between members of different political communities.) By focusing on relations between co-nationals and not on relations between citizens of different nations, relational egalitarian analyses of guest worker programs fail to appreciate how guest worker programs can alleviate problematic relational inequalities.

Above, I made the distinction between oppressive relational inequalities and personally degrading relational inequalities. It is the former that are relevant when considering international relations, because personally degrading relational inequalities only come into play when there are more robust social ties between people than those that normally exist in relations that cross international borders. Thus, relational egalitarians should want to know the extent to which international relationships in our world tend to leave one person or group of people vulnerable to being oppressed, exploited, or taken advantage of by another person or group of people.

Although he does not himself discuss relational egalitarianism so far as I am aware, Thomas Pogge's writing raises issues that are especially relevant to the question at hand. Pogge argues that wealthy countries not only fail to effectively aid the world's poor, but also actively harm them by supporting a global order that favors the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor, powerless, and vulnerable. The rich rig the system against the poor in a variety of ways:

subsidies on domestic products, tariffs on goods from developing countries, bribes for officials in developing countries, purchases of natural resources from corrupt and illegitimate heads of state, and loans to illegitimate, dysfunctional leaders. This exploitation of the world's poor by the world's rich stems from an imbalance of power.⁶⁰ Whereas rich countries have functional political systems and sufficient resources to effectively represent the interests of their citizens at the global level, poor countries do not. Thus, when there is a conflict of interest between a poor country and a rich country, it is the rich country's interests that tend to prevail. It is inequality in the relationships between rich countries and poor countries, as well as between citizens of the former and citizens of the latter, that allow the world's rich to exploit and oppress the world's poor in the ways that Pogge identifies. Therefore, these international relationships are exactly the sorts of relationships that should be of utmost concern to relational egalitarians.

At this point it is worth addressing some potential objections to what is in the previous paragraph. It may seem that, in order for there to be oppressive relational inequalities between countries, there must be a global "basic structure." "Basic structure" is a Rawlsian term for a society's main political, economic, and social institutions. There is a longstanding debate in the field of global justice about whether it makes sense to say that there is a global basic structure that plays a similar role in the international arena to the role that a basic structure plays in a single society. Pogge is a prominent participant in this debate, arguing that there is such a structure. I want to avoid wading into this debate, because I do not see it as relevant to my argument that there are oppressive relational inequalities between countries. Relations between countries take place in the context of certain international institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the United Nations. I am

⁶⁰ Pogge, Thomas Winfried Menko. "Severe Poverty as a Human Rights Violation." *Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right*. Oxford UP; UNESCO, 2009, 11-53.

not sure whether these institutions constitute an international basic structure. What is true is that these institutions currently favor the interests of the world's rich relative to those of the world's poor in ways that Pogge describes in great detail. For example, the bargaining structure of the WTO is based on a particular norm of reciprocity. This means that "if country A opens its markets to \$10 billion of country B's exports, B is required to do the same for A. Countries require tariff concessions of exactly equal value before a deal can be struck."⁶¹ The problem with this arrangement is that small developing countries are unable to offer large economic powers much in terms of market access, so they are unable to negotiate reduced trade barriers with rich countries.⁶² The important point is that relationships between countries are significantly affected by inequalities, and that these inequalities often make poor countries vulnerable to being taken advantage of by rich countries.

Another worry might be that relational egalitarianism is concerned only with the effect of relational inequalities on individuals, and that inequalities between states is simply a different topic. My response is to simply point out that states are made up of individuals, and that individual citizens' lives are significantly affected by inequalities in relations between states. Take the above example of how the current WTO negotiating system is biased against many poor countries. This is worrisome primarily because of its effect on the lives of individuals who live in poor countries. It is a significant impediment to economic growth—which directly affects individuals—in developing countries when producers (individuals) of goods in those countries are unable to sell their goods to buyers living in rich countries because of trade barriers that favor rich countries' domestic producers at the expense of their potential competitors in developing

⁶¹ Brock, 228

⁶² *ibid*

countries. If relational egalitarians care primarily about the effect of inequality on individuals, then this concern should cause them to also care about inequalities between countries.

Because of the severe oppressive relational inequalities that exist in the current international order, there is a strong relational egalitarian argument for reforming international institutions to give poor countries a way of effectively representing the interests of their citizens. But what does this have to do with guest worker programs? It is easy to say that the international order must be reformed so that the world's poor are treated more justly. Unfortunately, reforming the international order is extremely difficult. There are a lot of powerful interest groups (where "interest groups" is defined broadly enough to include countries) that benefit from the current international order and are thus highly resistant to change. Additionally, the political institutions in many poor countries are either too dysfunctional or lack the resources necessary to capably represent the interests of their people. In light of these issues, we (and by "we", I mean citizens of developed countries, and especially Americans) should use every tool available to ameliorate the effects of these oppressive relational inequalities.

The potential of guest worker programs to reduce oppressive relational inequality may not be immediately obvious, but we should not underestimate it. If international oppressive relational inequalities facilitate exploitation of poor countries by rich countries, then in addition to putting an end to this exploitation, rich countries should offer citizens of poor countries a way out. Guest worker programs provide exactly this opportunity to the extent that they represent a politically feasible form of immigration. As I argue in chapter one, a policy that would allow citizens of poor countries to legally work in rich countries is likely to have significant economic benefits both for migrant workers and for migrant workers' families (in the form of remittances). By giving some people who are among the world's worst off the opportunity to become

somewhat better off, guest worker programs have the potential to reduce the severity of some oppressive relational inequalities.

It is curious that Wellman and Walzer fail to recognize the reasons that I have just explained for relational egalitarians to favor guest worker programs. To speculate a bit, I think that one reason that relational egalitarians might not give international relational inequalities the consideration that they deserve is that they assume that relational egalitarian worries apply only to personal relationships (where “personal” is understood broadly enough to include intra-state relations, but not so broadly as to include inter-state relations). It is true that some inequalities that are relatively unproblematic when they occur between people who do not share a robust personal relationship can become problematic when they occur between people who do. The following example from Wellman illustrates this nicely: consider a “father/husband who travels by first-class while his wife and children must go by economy class. What leaps out about this scenario is not merely that some people get to travel more comfortably than others; it is that such disparity exists within the context of a family. Were it not for the fact that this man is the husband and father of these second-class travelers, the example would not be so striking.”⁶³ But just because some relational inequalities only become concerning for relational egalitarians when they occur in the context of a personal relationship does not mean that the same is true for all relational inequalities. This is where I think that my distinction between oppressive relational inequalities and personally degrading relational inequalities is helpful. Unlike personally degrading relational inequalities, oppressive relational inequalities can occur even in the absence of a personal relationship. It is because relational egalitarianism is concerned not just with personally degrading relational inequalities, but also with oppressive relational inequalities, that

⁶³ Wellman, 136

there are strong relational egalitarian reasons to be concerned with the international order in its current form.

2.4 Compared to What?

Relational egalitarians oppose guest worker programs, or at least some forms of guest worker programs, because they worry that these programs put immigrants in situations in which they are vulnerable to oppression and personal degradation at the hands of their employers and, more generally, the government and citizens of the country in which they are working. As I have already acknowledged, these are valid worries, and they deserve to be taken seriously when crafting public policy related to guest workers. Walzer seems to take these worries to rule out most guest worker programs. Wellman, taking a more moderate stance, believes that relational egalitarian worries only rule out guest worker programs with too long of a duration. Against Walzer and Wellman, I will now suggest some reasons to doubt that these concerns, even when given the consideration they deserve, significantly undermine the case for temporary worker programs.

Consider Elena, a woman who immigrated to the United States to find work in restaurants and the domestic service industry. The restaurant job she found required her to do long hours of hard work for very low pay, relative to American standards. She worked twelve hours a day, six days a week, for an hourly wage of \$4.16. Hard work for relatively low pay is of course more or less the norm for life as a low-skilled immigrant in the United States. But things were even worse than that for Elena: she was denied pay for six months by her employer, and she was also required to do more and more tasks that were not included in her job description.

This seems to be exactly the kind of situation that causes relational egalitarians to worry about guest worker programs. Poor immigrants enter a country without the rights and resources

that citizens enjoy and are thus taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers who try to exploit immigrants' disadvantaged and often desperate situations. But there is an important detail about Elena's situation that causes her to be especially vulnerable: Elena is not a guest worker, but an illegal immigrant.⁶⁴ Elena is far from alone: the Pew Hispanic Research Center estimated that there were 11.2 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States as of March 2010.⁶⁵ The US is, unsurprisingly, not alone. As of 2008, according to one estimate, the European Union had more than 10 million undocumented immigrants living within its borders.⁶⁶

Elena shares not only her illegal status with millions of other people around the world, but also a range of experiences that are typical of life as an illegal alien. Many immigrants, desperate to find a way to support their families because of a lack of decent work opportunities in their native countries, set off for the United States and other developed countries without even knowing the kind of work that they will be doing, what they will be paid, or what the terms of employment will be. To get across the border, prospective illegal immigrants often must pay thousands of dollars to a "coyote," or smuggler. They are packed into the backs of dark, hot, crowded vans and trucks, where they must stay for days at a time without food or even any sanitary way of relieving themselves.⁶⁷ Because of the strong presence of border patrol agents in

⁶⁴ McClane, Brianna and Shannon Mehner. "Exploited Immigrants, Unaware of Labor Laws, Afraid to Fight Mistreatment." *Medill Reports-Chicago*. Northwestern University, 20 May 2010.

⁶⁵ Cohn, D'Vera, and Jeffrey Passel. "Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010. *Pew Hispanic Center*. Pew Research Center, 1 Feb. 10.

⁶⁶ Avril, Pierre. "L'Europe Harmonise Sa Lutte Contre Les Clandestins." *Le Figaro.fr*. Le Figaro, 6 June 2008.

⁶⁷ It is worth mentioning that there is considerable diversity in the illegal immigrant population in the United States, and that illegal border crossings are not part of the experience of many undocumented workers. About half of undocumented workers in the United States come from Mexico. Most of these workers enter the country by illegally crossing the border. Conversely, most non-Mexican undocumented workers enter the country legally with legitimate temporary work visas and then overstay their visas. See Rivera-Batiz, Francisco, "Illegal Immigrants in the

American cities on or near the Mexico border, illegal immigrants entering the United States from Mexico are often forced to cross the border in sparsely-populated but treacherous mountain and desert regions (whether or not they are aided by a coyote).

Once they succeed in crossing the border, low-skilled illegal immigrants face many of the same barriers as low-skilled guest workers. Since they often do not speak the language of the country that is their new home, they face barriers in performing even the most mundane daily activities. They live in small communities of fellow illegal immigrants that tend to be isolated from the rest of society. They are usually unfamiliar with laws and procedures in their new homes, which leaves them at the mercy of their employers. As was the case with Elena, employers frequently take advantage of this situation by underpaying their undocumented employees, by subjecting undocumented employees to dangerous workplace conditions, and by violating the terms of employment agreements.

Many undocumented workers immigrate to find jobs that will allow them to support their families back in their native countries. However, because of their illegal status, they are unable to return home to visit their loved ones (because of the high cost and risk associated with crossing the border to go back to work after their visits home). Illegal immigrants thus have no choice but to endure the psychological trauma of being separated from their families for months or years at a time.

The purpose of this discussion is to highlight the inevitable problems that will exist for a country that elects to pursue a closed-border policy. Philosophers often explicitly make unrealistic simplifying assumptions so that they are able to reflect on questions about morality

and justice without getting bogged down in mess empirical debates. Philosophers identify some desirable ideal, and then think of it as the job of social scientists to figure out how to reach that ideal, and to figure out how to deal with complicating factors that may emerge as idealizing assumptions are relaxed. I certainly have nothing against an academic division of labor, and I acknowledge that philosophers are often not well-qualified to address complicated economic, sociological, and psychological questions. Obviously, however, the value of philosophical idealization in specifying goals for societies and states to pursue depends on whether or not philosophers' idealizing assumptions are justified. One assumption that philosophers often make is that when the state decides upon a system of laws, the citizens living under those laws will obey them. But it is not clear that this is a good assumption to make. In particular, problems arise when Walzer and Wellman assume universal compliance with restrictive immigration laws.

When human beings have strong incentives, economic or otherwise, to do something, they tend to be exceptionally innovative at finding ways around legal restrictions on doing it. The political cartoonist John Trever wittily illustrated this in a piece that depicts construction workers building a fence on the US-Mexico border under a sign that reads, "Under Construction: 20-Foot High Border Fence." Meanwhile, on the South side of the border, a man is painting a sign that reads, "Open Soon: Raul's 21-Foot Ladder Rentals."⁶⁸ If a non-American really wants to get into the United States, a law prohibiting him from doing so and a fence blocking the border is probably not going to be enough to stop him. Of course, this does not mean that *nothing* could stop immigrants from illegally entering the US; if border patrol agents were placed every thirty feet along the US-Mexico border from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific

⁶⁸ Trever, John. "Raul's 21-Foot Ladder Rentals." Cartoon. *Albuquerque Journal* 24 Sept. 2006, Editorial sec.

Ocean with “shoot to kill” orders, I do not doubt that illegal immigration into the United States would drop off substantially.

Surely less severe “solutions” could be devised as well. But whatever measure is taken to keep people from legally entering, there are real trade-offs involved, both in terms of the economic expenses associated with building fences and hiring border patrol agents, and more importantly the human costs that such controls have on the illegal immigrants themselves. Advocates of restrictive immigration policies need to take these trade-offs seriously and explain how we should weigh them against the interests of a country in controlling who legally enters its territory and against worries about allowing non-citizens to legally enter a country as guest workers without all the political rights that citizens enjoy. Whether or not one agrees with me that these considerations should lead us to favor a robust system of reasonably well-designed guest worker programs, surely one cannot just *assume away* factors that might pose problems for one’s favored approach. Walzer seems to be guilty of something like this when he concludes that guest worker programs are unjust without considering the effects that restrictive immigration policies have on the people with whom Walzer is primarily concerned during his discussion of guest worker programs. A country that adopts a law denying immigrants access to its territory will not completely succeed in actually keeping immigrants from entering its territory. And just because a person does not have legal authorization to be in a certain territory does not mean that that person stops being deserving of moral consideration.

Walzer and Wellman worry about the relational inequalities that may exist between citizens and guest worker immigrants. Whether relational egalitarian worries about guest worker programs justify opposing guest worker programs depends on what the alternative to guest worker programs would be. It would be one thing if the alternative to guest worker programs

were an open borders policy. Practically speaking, however, the alternative to guest worker programs is often restrictive immigration policies plus lots of illegal immigration. In this section, I have tried to show that when the alternative to guest worker programs is restrictive immigration policies plus lots of illegal immigration, relational egalitarian concerns about the latter should probably outweigh relational egalitarian concerns about the former.

2.5 Conclusion

If my argument has been convincing, then I have shown that there is good reason for relational egalitarians to favor guest worker programs. But that does not mean that Walzer and Wellman's concerns about guest worker programs are completely misplaced, nor that relational egalitarians must necessarily support *any* guest worker program. What is important for relational egalitarians to recognize is the regrettable fact that there are no options currently on the table that would completely eliminate relational inequalities. Relational egalitarians must weigh available options to determine which ones would most effectively reduce relational oppression and personal degradation. There are likely a wide variety of policy options that should be pursued to further this goal, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to argue for a specific policy that relational egalitarians should support. What I hope to have demonstrated here is that guest worker programs have the potential to reduce injustice and inequality in the world, and that guest worker programs therefore deserve the support of relational egalitarians.

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